

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife
1006 West Lake Street
Minneapolis 8, Minnesota

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Robert W. Burwell, Regional Director of the U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Minneapolis, Minnesota, disclosed Federal Agents and State Game Wardens made a widespread series of arrests at dawn today to expose a massive wildlife racket.

A total of 95 individuals in the States of Wisconsin, Michigan and Illinois were named in Federal warrants charging them with trafficking in waterfowl.

Forty-one (41) Federal Agents from 11 states, together with Game Wardens from the three states involved, took part in the mass arrest. The operation was directed by F. H. "Flick" Davis, Regional Supervisor of Enforcement for the Minneapolis Office of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, and C. H. Lawrence, Assistant Chief for Enforcement for the Bureau's Washington Office.

Evidence gathered over a period of two years by Federal Criminal Investigator Anthony M. Stefano revealed that the persons charged were actively engaged in hunting and killing waterfowl for the market.

Market hunting, illegal since 1918, has nevertheless continued to flourish in many areas in the United States by means of an almost fantastic network of carefully concealed operations.

A total of 10 Federal warrants were issued in Wisconsin, 21 in Michigan, and 65 in Illinois. The undercover operations conducted by the Government was instigated by numerous complaints reaching the Bureau of Sport

Fisheries and Wildlife that market hunting had reached serious proportions in the areas involved.

During the course of the investigation, Stefano purchased in excess of 5,000 wild ducks and geese, which constituted a small percentage of the birds actually offered for sale by the market hunters. The market hunters operated during both the open and closed season. Many of the birds taken by them were trapped with the aid of bait, placed alive in gunny sacks and then shot, while others were shot at night while concentrated on their resting areas. It was determined the market hunters had a ready market for their wares, disposing of their illegal kill to individuals and night clubs, or through channels to markets in other parts of the country.

With waterfowl becoming scarcer and daily bag and possession limits more difficult to secure by the legitimate sportsmen, the kill by market hunters constitutes a serious threat to the future of wildfowling wherever the racket exists.

The job Stefano performed at considerable personal risk resulted in the greatest roundup of market hunters in the history of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The arrests are the most widespread since there has been Federal laws regulating waterfowl.

Similar crackdowns were made in California in 1954, where a total of 33 persons were arrested, and in Texas in 1956, where a total of 53 persons were arrested, all of whom were charged with trafficking in waterfowl. Total penalties assessed in the above actions amounted to 11 years, 8 months in jail, 26 years, 3 months probation; \$14,575 paid in fines and \$18,650 suspended. In almost all instances the defendants were deprived of the privilege to hunt for periods up to three years.